

Sivs festskrift



Primitive tider

Sivs festskrift

Primitive tider

Spesialutgave 2023



Primitive
tider

Redaktører spesialutgave: Anja Mansrud, Ingunn Røstad, Unn Pedersen og Kristin Armstrong Oma

Spesialutgave 2023

ISSN 1501-0430

Postadresse:

Primitive tider

Postboks 6727, St. Olavs plass

0130 Oslo

Norway

Epost: kontakt@primitive-tider.com

Nettside: <https://journals.uio.no/PT/index>

Ombrekk: Marie Dave Amundsen

Trykk: Grafisk senter, Universitetet i Oslo

© CC BY 4.0

Forsideillustrasjon: Arne Johan Nærøy © Arkeologisk museum, Universitetet i Stavanger.

Foto s. 3 (neste side): Bodil Teig, Gyldendal.

Skrive for Primitive tider?

Primitive tider oppfordrer spesielt uetablerte forfattere til å skrive. Vi er interessert i artikler, kommentarer til tidligere artikler og rapporter (enklere, ikke fagfellevurderte tekster). Kanskje blir din artikkel neste nummers debatttema! Send inn ditt manuskript og la det få en faglig og seriøs vurdering av redaksjonen. Husk at hele prosessen kan være tidkrevende, så planegg i god tid.

Innleveringsfrister og forfatterveiledningen finner du på våre nettsider:

<https://journals.uio.no/PT/index>



Dear Siv,

Throughout the years you have inspired us all immensely, with your books, articles, talks in museums and beyond, and not least the many informal chats. You approach people like you approach the archaeological material, with curiosity and enthusiasm, seeing and supporting us at the different stages in our careers. You generously share your vast knowledge and keen insights. Combining a sharp eye with a kind and inviting attitude, you encourage people around you and make them aware of their strengths. With this book we hope to give something back to you as a token of our appreciation. Here is a collection of articles from researchers and museum staff you have encountered at different times in your career, and a Tabula reflecting your wide international network of colleagues and friends.

When sending out the invitation to a selected group to contribute with a paper to this collection, we made the order both specific and open, simply asking for ‘something you would like Siv to read!’ The invitation included texts to be peer reviewed, and more popularising, non-reviewed papers. The result is a mix of texts from scholars in various fields, including craft practitioners and designers. The outcome shows that the contributors have taken our request to heart, making this a personal book, with contributions both in English and all the Scandinavian languages on various “Siv-related” topics.

The book testifies to your huge impact, and how your thinking and publications have stimulated research in various fields. You will notice how the contributors have a secondary agenda, reminding you of all the research projects – big and small – and all the discussion and dialogue still ahead of you. We hope you will take these hints as subtle invitations towards further joint efforts and collaborations in the years to come.

The editors, Anja Mansrud, Ingunn Røstad, Unn Pedersen og Kristin Armstrong Oma,
on behalf of all of us

Tabula Gratulatoria

Marie Dave Amundsen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Ingvild Andreassen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Anders Andrén,
Stockholms universitet

Rica Annaert,
Ekeren

Arkeologisk bibliotek,
Universitetet i Oslo

Kristin Armstrong Oma,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Morten Axboe og Else Bojsen,
Virum

Irene Baug,
Universitetet i Bergen

Charlotte Behr,
University of Roehampton London

Birgitta Berglund,
NTNU

Jostein Bergstøl,
Universitetet i Oslo

Knut Andreas Bergsvik,
Universitetet i Bergen

Rosie Bishop,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Ruth Blankenfeldt,
Zentrum für Baltische und Skandinavische
Archäologie

Meriem Boulaziz,
Universitetet i Oslo

Heidi M. Breivik,
NTNU

Margareth Hana Buer,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Grethe Bjørkan Bukkemoen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Jørgen Tinglum Bøckman,
Veien kulturminnepark

Ellen Tjørnholm Bøe,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Claus v. Carnap-Bornheim,
Fahrdorf

Torben Trier Christiansen,
Nordjyske Museer

Barbro Dahl,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Volker Demuth,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Tania Dickinson,
University of York

Sigrid Alræk Dugstad,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Bettina Ebert,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Krister Eilertsen,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Øystein Ekroll,
Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeider

Kathy Elliott,
Universitetet i Oslo

Asbjørn Engevik,
Universitetet i Bergen

Per Ethelberg og Anne Birgitte Sørensen,
Museum Sønderjylland

Lars Forseth,
Trøndelag fylkeskommune

Per Ditlef Fredriksen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Ingrid Fuglestvedt,
Universitetet i Oslo

Kidane Gebremariam,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Berit Gjerland,
Førde

Lars Erik Gjerpe,
Universitetet i Oslo

Zanette T. Glørstad,
Universitetet i Oslo

Line Grindkåsa,
Vestfold og Telemark fylkeskommune

Anne-Sofie Gräslund,
Uppsala universitet

Sverre Christoffer Guldborg,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Svein H. Gullbekk,
Universitetet i Oslo

Sigrd Mannsåker Gundersen,
Viken fylkeskommune

Ingar Mørkestøl Gundersen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Ulla Lund Hansen,
Københavns Universitet

Sue Harrington,
Durham University

Åsa Dahlin Hauken,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Lotte Hedeager,
Universitetet i Oslo

Charlotte Hedenstierna-Jonson,
Uppsala universitet

Catherine Hills,
University of Cambridge

John Hines,
Cardiff University

Kari Loe Hjelle,
Universitetet i Bergen

Tove Hjørungdal,
Göteborgs universitet

Hege Ingjerd Hollund,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Alf Tore Hommedal,
Universitetet i Bergen

Anne Karin Hufthammer og Svein Indrelid,
Universitetet i Bergen

Randi Håland,
Universitetet i Bergen

Nelleke IJssennagger-van der Pluijm,
Fryske Akademy

Xenia Pauli Jensen,
Moesgaard Museum

Tuija Kirkinen,
University of Helsinki

Arild Klokkervoll,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Egge Knol,
Groninger Museum

Kyrre Kverndokk,
Universitetet i Bergen

Grete og Arnvid Lillehammer,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Anders Lindahl,
Lund University and University of Pretoria

Julie Lund,
Universitetet i Oslo

Ole Madsen,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Bente Magnus,
Oslo

Anja Mansrud,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Toby Martin,
University of Oxford

Sonja Marzinzik,
Bavarian State Archaeological Collection

Lene Melheim,
Universitetet i Oslo

Trond Meling,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Marianne Moen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Marte Mokkelbost,
Universitetet i Bergen

Michael Neiß,
Lunds universitet and Aarhus Universitet

Karen Høilund Nielsen,
Aarhus Universitet

Camilla Nordby,
Universitetet i Bergen

Linda Nordeide,
Viken fylkeskommune

Astrid J. Nyland,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Arne Johan Nærøy,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Sigmund Oehrl,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Terje Oestigaard,
Uppsala universitet

John Olsen,
Vest-Agder-museet

Unn Pedersen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Grethe Moéll Pedersen,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Alexandra Pesch,
Zentrum für Baltische und Skandinavische
Archäologie

Aina Margrethe Heen Pettersen,
NTNU

Christopher Prescott,
Universitetet i Oslo

Lisbeth Prøsch-Danielsen,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Linn Eikje Ramberg,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Morten Ramstad,
Universitetet i Bergen

Andreas Rau,
Zentrum für Baltische und Skandinavische
Archäologie

Katja Regevik,
Vest-Agder-museet

Håkon Reiersen,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Martin Rundkvist,
Uniwersytet Łódzki

Bente Ruud,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Solveig Sølva Rødsdalen,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Christian Løchsen Rødsrud,
Universitetet i Oslo

Ingunn M. Røstad,
Universitetet i Oslo

Margrete Figenschou Simonsen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Ole Jacob Stalheim Skagen,
Oslo

Dagfinn Skre,
Universitetet i Oslo

Brit Solli,
Universitetet i Oslo

Marte Spangen,
Universitetet i Oslo

Kathrine Stene,
Universitetet i Oslo

Randi Stoltz,
Bergen

Nils Ole Sundet,
Agder fylkeskommune

Olof Sundqvist,
Stockholms universitet

Birgit Tansøy,
Vestland fylkeskommune

Espen Uleberg,
Universitetet i Oslo

Hege Vatnaland,
Stavanger

Marianne Vedeler,
Universitetet i Oslo

Tingvatn fornminnepark,
Vest-Agder-museet

Vibeke Maria Viestad,
Universitetet i Oslo

James Walker,
University of Bradford

Anna Wessman,
Universitetet i Bergen

Sara Westling,
Universitetet i Stavanger

Nancy L. Wicker,
University of Mississippi

Ingrid Ystgaard,
NTNU

Torun Zachrisson,
Upplandsmuseet

Mari Arentz Østmo,
Universitetet i Oslo

Hanne Lovise Aannestad,
Universitetet i Oslo

Innhold

Fagfellevurderte artikler:

What's in a symbol? Some thoughts on the enigmatic triquetra <i>Alexandra Pesch</i>	11
What happened in the hinterland? A batch study of early bucket-shaped pots from the 4th and 5th centuries AD in Southwest Norway <i>Per Ditlef Fredriksen og Anders Lindahl</i>	23
Magic, metallurgy and embodied powers Nordic folklore, empowerment and deification in material culture <i>Terje Oestigaard</i>	35
Ogna kyrkje på Jæren Eit blikk på ei arkeologisk utgraving <i>Alf Tore Hommedal</i>	45
A rune-like carving on a terra sigillata bowl from the early medieval cemetery of Deiningen, Bavaria <i>Sigmund Oehrl</i>	59
Flying riddles Disentangling animal style elements on Merovingian-period bird brooches <i>Ingunn M. Røstad</i>	71
How to become an Iron Age weaver An experiment based on a new analysis of a tablet-woven band with animal motifs from Snartemo II (Agder, Norway AD 500) <i>Randi Stoltz</i>	81
An early set of clasps from Østabø in Sandeid, south-western Norway <i>Håkon Reiersen</i>	87
Giving mixed signals On gendered readings of Late Iron Age figurines <i>Marie Dave Amundsen og Marianne Moen</i>	97
Mesolithic cross-crafting Experiments with the manufacture of bone blanks from elk metapodials <i>Anja Mansrud</i>	107
Damen i Viken En folkvandringstida kvinne frå Lovö, Sverige <i>Torun Zachrisson</i>	123

Crossing crafts, merging arts	137
A new find of a 9th century AD Oseberg-style hanging bowl suspension mount from Jarlsberg, Vestfold, southern Norway	
<i>Zanette T. Glørstad</i>	
"Hørte du kor hardt dei i Hafrsfjord slost; berserkar bura (...), ulvhednar ula"	141
Dyrekrigarar, kjønnsroller og ontologisk status i jernaldersamfunnet	
<i>Kristin Armstrong Oma og Arild Klokkervoll</i>	
The Old Norse <i>goði</i> and his ring	157
<i>Olof Sundqvist</i>	
The power of beauty	173
The Oseberg ship burial and its <i>finurlighet</i>	
<i>Unn Pedersen</i>	
The medieval landscapes of Bergen	183
Enhanced knowledge through vegetation reconstructions and pollen data from multiple sites	
<i>Kari Loe Hjelle</i>	
Andre artikler:	
Å møblere et langhus	195
<i>Bente Magnus</i>	
På vej mod smeltingen...	203
<i>Morten Axboe</i>	
Levende formidling	209
Å formidle fra hjertet til hjerter	
<i>Ellen T. Bøe</i>	
Spinnehjul under radaren	217
De eldste spinnehjulene i Norge	
<i>Åsa Dahlin Hauken</i>	
Siv som faglig guru	225
Dypdykk i et lite utvalg av hennes fabelaktige reise i utstillingsverdenen	
<i>Bente Ruud og Kristin Armstrong Oma</i>	

Flying riddles

Disentangling animal style elements on Merovingian-period bird brooches

Ingunn M. Røstad

Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo

The definition of different elements in these motifs is, however, a demanding task. Knowledge of a large body of material is required, where motifs of more realistic and understandable expressions as well as the ones in different stages of abstraction are represented. (Kristoffersen 2010:263)

Introduction

The citation above, from the work of Elna Siv Kristoffersen, concerns motifs depicted in the animal art style of the Migration Period, i.e. decorative elements in Salin's (1904) Style I. As I will argue here however, this is just as relevant when it comes to understanding later versions of animal styles dating to the Scandinavian Iron Age. In the following discussion, I will explore some metal objects with animal style decoration using Kristoffersen's approach, which compares related elements of various motifs found on different objects to obtain a clearer idea of the elements of specific designs. My focus of research will be a group of bird brooches dating to the seventh century AD (Ørsnes 1966:101–105; Nielsen 1999:189), the second phase of the Norwegian Merovingian Period (Røstad 2021:72).¹

The bird brooches are formed as birds with folded wings viewed from above, classified as Mogens Ørsnes' (1966) type D. The number of known

brooches in this group has increased rapidly in recent years. When first published as a comprehensive corpus in 2008 only ten specimens were known from the whole of Norway (Røstad 2008), while in 2020 the number had surpassed 50 brooches (Rødsrud and Røstad 2020:179). Today the number is probably over 100, and more finds are continuously brought to light, mostly due to metal detecting activities. As the body of material increases, new sub-types have appeared displaying new motifs. Some recently discovered brooches are decorated with complex animal style motifs in Salin's (1904) Style II. Their decorative scheme is somewhat enigmatic. While some elements are more readily distinguished, others appear to be hidden or woven into geometrical and interlace patterns. The depictions on certain brooches seem to represent a thoroughly abstracted stage where the individual elements are almost impossible to interpret. However, when examining these brooches, it is evident that by looking at several different brooches simultaneously and comparing their motifs, some puzzling elements appearing on one brooch can be illuminated by more realistic representations occurring on another. Furthermore, by widening the scope to include related images found on other types of contemporary objects, a greater

¹ I got the idea for this paper when talking to Siv about the animal style motifs on some bird brooches I was just cataloguing. Siv told me about the method she used to understand more of the individual elements in the decorations.

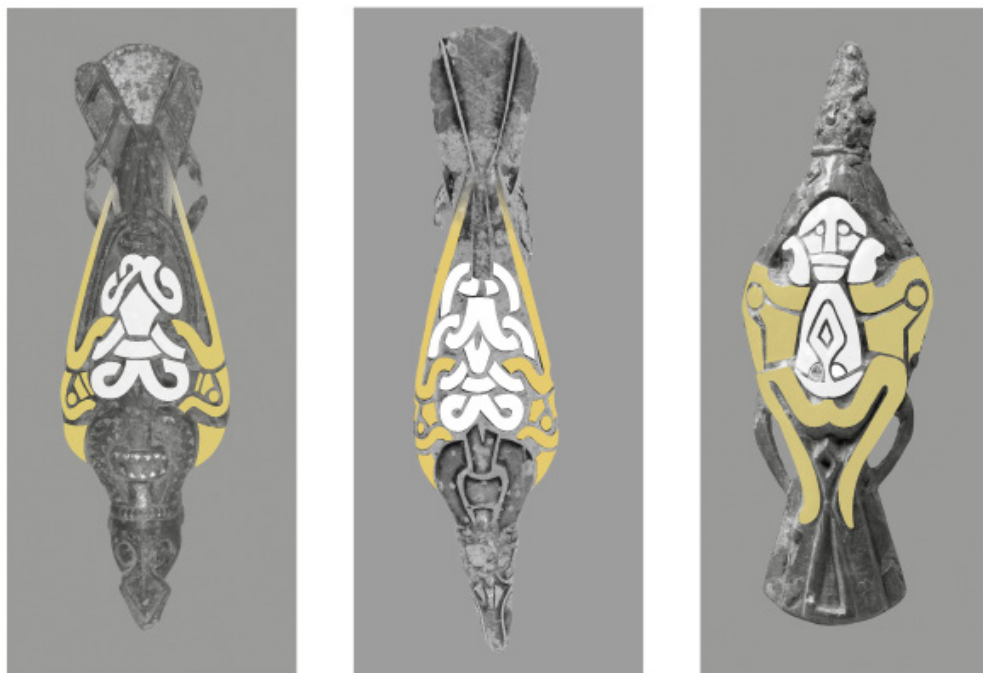


Figure 1. From left: Bird brooches from Gålås, Ringsaker, Berg østre, Ringsaker and Foss nordre, Sørums. The brooches are all oriented with the head of the male figures pointing upwards. Illustration: Johnny Kreutz. Photo: © Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo.

understanding can be gained which enable the various elements in their decoration to be defined.

In the following discussion, I will present three bird brooches with different Style II-motifs as a case study (Figure 1). Their individual decorative schemes will be presented, and a comparative analysis between the three brooches will be carried out. I will discuss what can be gained by scrutinising the specific decorative elements as part of a larger body of related images that also includes depictions associated with other kinds of material culture. I will argue that this methodological approach enables us to gain a more thorough understanding of the decorative layout of the various bird brooches, and that it further allows us to explore “[...] the idea of ‘composition’ as a structuring principle that can not only be applied to single or multiple images on an object, but also between objects” (Martin

2020:10). The aim is not to reveal the mythical symbolic content of the images, but to expose this form of depiction as a state of mind indicative of pre-Christian societies of the North.

Introducing the brooches and their images

The three brooches that form the basis of this study were unearthed in southeastern Norway: Two specimens come from Gålås and Berg østre, Ringsaker *kommune* in Hedmark, and the third from Foss nordre, Sørums *kommune* in Akershus. In a Norwegian context bird brooches of this type show a marked concentration of distribution in this part of the country, although they occasionally occur in other regions as well (Rødstrud and Røstad 2020:179–182, figure 8.4 and table 8.1). The three brooches are all shaped according to the main type as defined by Ørsnes, i.e. as birds with folded wings viewed from above. However,

with their complex animal style ornaments, they fit neither of Ørsnes' subtypes.² They are made of copper-alloy and are of a high quality with distinct relief decoration. They have a shiny surface, probably obtained through a tin-rich copper-alloy. On the Gålås brooch additional tinning was used in the surface decoration creating a silvery impression. On their back, the birds display different images. Within the continually growing corpus of brooches, these three specimens stand out on the basis of the choice of the motifs for their elaborately executed back-decorations. Moreover, their animal style depictions allow us to connect them with images found on various other types of Merovingian-period objects.

The Gålås brooch (Figure 1, left) is decorated with two style II animal heads in profile symmetrically placed so that their necks and long extended jaws constitute the outline of the bird's shoulders and back. The animal's jaws are open, and they bite over a ribbon-shaped element that frames in and simultaneously forms part of an interlace- and loop/knot-pattern that covers the middle section of the back of the bird, from the neck down to the tail.

The brooch from Berg østre (Figure 1, middle) displays the same motif with the symmetrically placed profile heads. At first sight it also seems to share the same loop/knot and interlace pattern, but when one looks a little closer at the decoration that covers the middle section of the bird's back between the two animal heads, this area of the brooch actually forms the motif of a man. The man is placed with his head turning towards the tail of the bird. The motif is schematically outlined, but his face has eyes, a moustache and a beard marked out. He holds his arms raised so that his hands touch his face, and his feet are pointing or bending outwards. The ribbon

element that the jaws of the profiled heads bite over is, in this case, the man's arms.

The third brooch, from Foss nordre (Figure 1, right), also shares the motif of the profiled heads but these are somewhat differently shaped than on the other two brooches since the jaws are in a closed position and the lower jaws are interlinked and meet in the middle and lower part of the bird's back. Centrally and diametrically placed above the interlinking jaws there is a human face and an animal-like mask executed *en face*. The human face turns towards the bird's head, and the animal mask towards its tail. The human face is of a man naturalistically shaped with eyes, brows, nose, moustache and beard, or possibly the brows and nose represent a helmet with a nose-guard. The mask or animal head is more schematically drawn, but has eyes, brows, and a triangular nose. The lower and back part of the profiled animal heads may possibly be interpreted simultaneously as human hands that touch the cheeks of the man's face, but this interpretation is difficult to ascertain based on this image alone.

Although the image on each brooch is individually formed, the motifs are, as noted, interconnected through the occurrence of certain shared elements. All three brooches share the motif of the symmetrically placed animal heads, while two display ribbon interlace or knot/loop-shaped elements. The motif of a human face seen *en face* occur on two of the specimens, and a further attribute that possibly is shared by these latter two are hands held up to the human face touching the man's cheek. The two brooches from Ringsaker have the most features in common. Indeed, the upper part of the two birds, from the neck down to the middle of the back are so similar that they are almost identical.

² Ørsnes (1966) figure 58 shows a bird-shaped plate brooch in openwork design with related motives of two symmetrically placed long-jawed animal heads like the ones described below. He groups this specimen together with another bird-shaped plate brooch with a completely different form of decoration (dot-and-rings punch marks) as his 'special type' (Danish: 'særtype') type D6 consisting only of these two bird-shaped plate brooches. It has earlier been pointed out that when it comes to subtypes in Ørsnes' (1966) scheme, these do not fit Norwegian variants of the bird brooches (Røstad 2008:107).

The images displayed on the bird's backs represent different levels of abstraction, where the defining of individual elements in certain cases represents a challenge. Yet, studied together, the brooches may shed more light on the elements used in the composition of the various motifs. For instance, while the diametrically presented mask and face motifs on the Foss brooch is more easily distinguished, its profiled heads seem to blend into the general framework or outline of the bird-shape. When seen together with the two other brooches, however, the profiled heads become clearly visible. The possible double function of the lower and back section of the profiled animal heads as human hands remains a mere suggestion. Nevertheless, this interpretation is supported by a similar image of hands touching a man's face occurring on the Berg specimen, and, as I will return to below, in other broadly contemporary imagery. Likewise, the interlace- and knot-work on the Berg brooch that form the shape of a man with arms and legs requires some scrutiny before it comes into focus. When it comes to the Gålås brooch, the level of abstraction is even further pronounced. With the exception of the profiled animal heads, this brooch seems to be decorated only with interlace and knot patterns. Nevertheless, when directly compared to the specimen from Berg, it is actually possible to disclose human elements such as the body (belt?), legs, upper arms and beard of a man. These elements only come into play when they are seen in connection with the clearer and more understandable depiction on the Berg brooch. Without the 'prototype' of the Berg brooch, these elements are incomprehensible. Moreover, when the two brooches from Foss and Berg are compared, the animal mask and the element of the interlinked animal jaws on the former may possibly be seen as forming or suggesting the contours of a body and outward bending legs belonging to the face of the man. This, however, must remain a mere suggestion or interpretation, but it may nevertheless, as I will return to below, find support in related and more clearly executed images of male figures in broadly contemporary imagery.

While the understanding of the Gålås image is directly dependent on the Berg depiction, the inclusion of the Foss brooch is not strictly necessary for 'unlocking' the imagery of the other two brooches – or vice versa. However, the interconnected imagery on the brooches makes it useful to consider all three together, broadening the scope for potential interpretations of individual elements.

To add further to the levels of abstraction conveyed by the imagery of the brooches, the dimensionality of the brooches may be considered. The brooches have the naturalistically moulded shape of a bird with a beak, eyes, feet and a tail with feathers. The positioning of the wings and feet indicate that the birds are flying: They are diving or plunging downwards. At the same time, these birds seem to 'fly about' with hidden animals and humans on their back functioning as a sort of flying riddles. In this way, they transgress the biological entity of a bird and are transformed into something more or something different (Kristoffersen 2010:265). Their design substantiates the motifs as mental representations and as such, they attribute a "[...] cultural reality that is more revealing than representations of known species" (Morphy 1989:5 in Kristoffersen 2010:265).

Interactive objects and dynamically formed compositions

The comparison of the three bird brooches has revealed an important aspect of their composition. It suggests that the compositions do not represent fixed properties but can be conceived as dynamically formed in interaction with other objects (see also Martin 2020:11). Thus, in this instance, the comparative method may also convey something about how the images were experienced in their cultural context and how they affected their contemporaries. To a beholder in the Merovingian Period – just as for us today – some elements and images would potentially only come into focus or materialize when occurring in combination with that of



Figure 2. From left to right: Bird brooches from Holter Mellom, Nes and Storhov, Elverum, belt buckle from Åker, Hamar. Illustration: Johnny Kreutz. Photo: © Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo.

another brooch or other related depictions. In this line, the brooches may be defined as an assemblage in the sense that they represent “[...] a specific arrangement of diverse, heterogeneous, interacting components that has specific *effects*; an assemblage acts, and acts in a way that none of its components can without being in such a configuration” (Fowler 2017:96). Assemblages are moreover always in the process of becoming, and they are formed through recurrent citations (Fowler 2017:96). In the meeting with related images, certain motifs depicted on the bird brooches potentially became apparent – they materialized – but by removing the same objects from each other’s spheres, the elements again were transformed, and the motifs dissolved.

Considering further objects and depictions that may have formed part of the same assemblage, a bird brooch from Holter Mellom, Nes *kommune* in Akershus is noteworthy since it displays

an even further stage of abstraction where the profiled animal heads are nearly dissolved into interlace patterns (Figure 2, left). Arguably, it is first when you see these in light of the more clearly depicted heads on brooches like the three described above, that they are discernible and disentangled from the interlace-work. Looking at yet another bird brooch, from Storhov, Elverum in Hedmark (Figure 2, middle), the decoration becomes even more enigmatic and may seem to consist of plain interlace. However, when compared to other broadly contemporary images, for instance the belt buckle from Åker, Hedmark (Figure 2, right), part of the pattern may be interpreted as actually depicting two animal legs with marked feet/paws and round thighs that are simultaneously marking out the shoulders of the bird. This is interesting because the Åker buckle not only displays related detached feet motifs, but also another image present on the Berg bird brooch and possibly also the Foss brooch: a man

with his hands raised to his face and with his feet bending outwards.

The depiction on the Åker buckle, dated to the earliest phase of the Merovingian Period, i.e. slightly earlier than the main corpus of bird brooches, represents one of the most clearly and elaborately executed representations of a recurrent theme in early Merovingian-period imagery: the transformation between human and animal and animal-human hybrids (Nielsen 2001:479-480; Hedeager 2011:76). On the Åker buckle, the man and the animals are all in a state of becoming by being in the process of transforming from one shape to the other. The man's legs are turning into two boars' heads and his hands function as the boars' forelegs – or vice versa; the boars may be in the process of being metamorphosed into a human. Additionally, detached animal elements such as bird heads and animal feet are placed on either side of the crown above the head of the man, two animal eyes are flanking the cloisonné-decorated shield-on-tongue, and two bird heads with ribbon-shaped necks form the loop of the buckle. Importantly, the detached eyes and feet represent so abstracted a form that they are not easily understood without the knowledge of other contemporary animal compositions of more clear design.

The transformation theme can be traced back to the preceding Migration Period through Style I animal art in which hybrid animal-human representations are also frequent (Kristoffersen 1995; 2010). Likewise, images of a man in similar pose with hands raised to the face and feet pointing outwards are found on Migration-period objects in Scandinavia, such as the gusset plates from Dalem in Trøndelag and Staurnes in Møre (Kristoffersen 2015:34–35, fig. 3.7), the gold collar from Ålleberg in Sweden and on several gold bracteates (see e.g. Pesch 2015:abb. 31, taf. 4.1;15.5.6, 214 and fig. 21.3, 429–447). On the gusset plates, the man's legs and arms are shaped like animals. Moreover, the motifs of a human head between two profiled animal heads occur in Migration-period contexts, e.g. on a relief

brooch from Lunde in southern Norway (see Salin 1904:fig. 490). Thus, both the image of a man in this particular posture and of a human head between animal heads occurring on the bird brooches most likely functioned as a citation not only to contemporary, but also to older, related images concerning the metamorphosis theme.

Playful interaction as a state of mind

Both the brooches and the Åker buckle were dress-accessories, although the latter was most likely part of a weapon belt/baldric. In other words, their practical function was to be worn as part of a person's clothing or outfit. The dynamic aspect of their decorative schemes is a characteristic associated also with other brooch types in the Merovingian Period. Birgit Arrhenius (1985:186) points to a parallel in the composition of a mask/*en face* motif on disc-on-bow brooches, where the motifs on several brooches is only identifiable by knowing the prototype. This mode of dynamic composition can be conceived as a kind of playful interaction of 'hide and seek', where certain motifs or elements emerge or 'come alive', disappear and reappear depending on their meeting with the imagery found on other objects in their surroundings. That objects displaying such depictions have the practical function as dress components is especially suitable, since they are as such meant to be 'moving about' with their owners. Their chances of interacting with other depictions accordingly are heightened compared to objects made to remain more or less in the same place, like for instance a decorative mount fastened on a drinking horn or a casket. Since the two Ringsaker brooches were found within a distance of c. 12 km of each other, it is not inconceivable that they might have interacted in this way during their lifetime.

However, the motifs of the symmetrically placed profiled animal heads and animal or human heads seen *en face* that are depicted on the bird brooches also occur in a broadly contemporary, but very different form of media; a picture stone from Stabo nedre, Østre Toten in Oppland (Gjessing

1934:Pl. XLVI). One side, usually interpreted as the front side of the stone, has a depiction of two symmetrically positioned profiled animal heads, while the other (back) shows interlinked ribbon-shaped animals with *en face* heads. The Stabo stone is the only genuine picture stone from Norway from the Merovingian Period.³ It is dated on basis of the motifs to the seventh century AD (Gjessing 1934:174–178; Herteig 1955:121–124). The *en face* heads on the stone share the broad triangular nose that characterises the same element on the Foss bird brooch. This is a feature that also occurs on several crest mounts of helmets from this period, e.g. a mount found on the neighbouring farm of the Stabo stone, Stabu Øvre (Herteig 1955:125, fig. 47a). Interestingly, a sword scabbard fitting from Lill-Bjärs, Stenkyrka on Gotland is shaped like a human head seen *en face* with a beard which is shaped like the tail of a bird in a very similar fashion to the tail of the bird usually found on the bird brooches (Nerman 1969:taf. 202, fig. 1679). Furthermore, images of symmetrically placed animal heads with an *en face* animal or human head/mask placed in between not only have a broad distribution in Scandinavia, but they are also found on the Continent and in England. These designs are as a rule made up of paired animal heads of three different species usually interpreted as wolfs, boars and/or eagles (Nielsen 2001:474–475). The fact that the same animal style motifs occur both on the picture stone and on various types of dress-accessories, weaponry, and other artefacts of this period, suggests that the motifs were not merely functioning as decorative components but were well known images to Merovingian-period beholders and that they were most likely instilled with a symbolic content familiar to the spectators (Hedeager 2011:75–98).

The Iron-age animal styles of Scandinavia arguably mirror a complex pre-Christian cosmology where animals had a principal role and where shapeshifting between human and animal forms occurred (Kristoffersen 1995; 2010; Hedeager 2011). It also seems to have

been a commonly held belief in Iron-age society that certain objects had agency (Kristoffersen 2010; Lund 2017; Røstad 2018:93–96; Kristoffersen and Pedersen 2020:56). In this context, it is conceivable that the general mentality in this period was characterised by the prevailing view that a specific ‘thing’ or physical being, whether this was an object, animal, a human or a god, was not necessarily what it appeared to be. The playfulness perceived in the ambiguity and illusiveness of the various decorative schemes and motifs of the bird brooches may thus reflect a state of mind where the ‘real world’ was conceived as ambiguous and illusive. This was a world where gods and forceful humans took on the shape and power of animals, objects had a will and acted on their own, and animals could actually represent humans or even gods. This indicates of course that the playfulness interwoven into the designs also incorporated a more sinister aspect. Was this a mere brooch shaped like a bird, or did it represent something else, and if so, what was its intentions? This ambiguity is perhaps also reflected, and possibly enhanced, in the outline or shape of the bird brooches. Their posture with folded wings and feet pointing backwards may indicate birds play-diving, but it may also be indicative of raptors attacking their prey and making a kill.

Small-scale communication

A final aspect of the brooches that need to be considered is their size, since this is of importance in connection with how they may have interacted with each other and with the imagery on other objects. Most of the brooches are quite small, measuring just 4.5–7.0 cm in length. This means that to be able to discern the motifs depicted on them, the beholder must be near the brooches. As implied by the analysis above of the various elements in the compositions of the motifs, the depictions were not easily defined or self-evident. Even when the proportions are ‘blown up’ through the method of modern photography, it is, as noted, somewhat difficult to disentangle the

³ The Eggja stone has a runic inscription combined with a horse figure.

individual elements. Their size must therefore have affected to what degree the images were able to communicate.

Besides the artisan(s) producing them, the one person who obviously would be able to have a closer look at the brooches was the owner. She or he would handle it, fasten it to their clothing, and perhaps remove it from the textiles when undressing,⁴ when washing the clothes, or on other occasions when the wearing of jewellery was not practical or appropriate. It seems probable that when handling the brooches, awareness of the details in their decoration would or could be gained, but it does not necessarily follow that the beholder would comprehend the motifs. The same goes for other potential spectators or observers such as a child carried on the arm or placed on the knee, or other family members and persons near at hand in the immediate surroundings of the owner (Kristoffersen 2014:177–179; 2015:35; Pedersen and Kristoffersen 2018:231). Only the artisan or group of artisans making up the designs are certain to have known the intentional content of the motifs (Pedersen and Kristoffersen 2018:230–231, 233).

Based on Lévi-Strauss' (1963) study of Indian art, Kristoffersen (2010:263) argues that the ambiguous, miniature and hard-to-get animal style motifs in Style I decorations were not produced in order to be observed, but rather to influence the object they adorn. This reflects a belief that if they were made the 'proper' way, the animals in the decoration could become part of the object and infuse it with power (cf. also Pedersen and Kristoffersen 2018:231). Thus, the main concern of the decorative schemes may have been to affect the object itself, thereby empowering it, but this does not necessarily exclude an intention for the object simultaneously to communicate in a subtle way with other imagery in its surroundings. The artisan might have envisioned the symbolic meaning potentially to reveal itself in certain contexts if

a chance meeting took place between the right types of objects – and if people in the surroundings happened to pay attention. Considering the small scale of the bird brooches with this form of decoration, the chance that these factors coincided was perhaps slight, but this may also have been deliberate. The animal style motifs may have represented specialised and restricted knowledge that was meant to be understood only by a chosen few (Kristoffersen 2000:127–147; Vedeler et al 2018:23). To other observers, the enigma of their composition was possibly meant to remain unsolved.

Conclusion

As advocated by Kristoffersen in the introductory citation above, our understanding of the decorative elements of the three bird brooches discussed here has much to gain from exploring them together and as part of a larger body of related images. This approach allows us to discern elements in their decoration otherwise not easily disentangled. Moreover, the interconnection between the imagery of the individual brooches as well as with other contemporary Style II depictions demonstrates that in some instances their compositions are dynamically formed, revealing their decorative schemes as a particular state of mind reflecting a pre-Christian ideology. This state of mind is characterised by an illuiveness and ambiguity present in the examined imagery, and the brooches arguably represent both a playful as well as a more sinister aspect of the Merovingian-period reality in which this imagery interacted.

A warm thank you to Siv who has been a good friend and a great source of inspiration to me for many years. I am grateful for having been so privileged as to collaborate with Siv on several projects, and I am very much looking forward to continuing doing so in the coming years.

⁴ Many of the brooches have a piercing in addition to the pin and catch plate which perhaps may imply that they were stitched on to the garment (Røstad 2008:104–105).

Bibliography

- Arrhenius, B. 1985 *Merovingian Garnet Jewellery: Emergence and social implications*. Almqvist & Wiksell International, Stockholm.
- Fowler, C. 2017 Relational Typologies, Assemblage Theory and Early Bronze Age Burials. *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 27(1):95–109.
- Gjessing, G. 1934 *Studier i norsk merovingertid. Kronologi og oldsakformer*. Det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo Skrifter, 2. Hist.-filos. Klasse. Jacob Dybwad, Oslo.
- Hedeager, L. 2011 *Iron Age myth and materiality: An archaeology of Scandinavia AD 400–1000*. Routledge, London.
- Herteig, A. 1955 *Bidrag til jernalderens busetningshistorie på Toten*. Det norske videnskaps-akademi skrifter. Dybwad, Oslo.
- Kristoffersen, S. 1995 Transformation in Migration Period animal art. *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 28(1995):1–17.
- Kristoffersen, S. 2000 *Sverd og Spenne. Dyreornamentikk og sosial kontekst*. Cappelen Damm høyskoleforlaget, Kristiansand.
- Kristoffersen, S. 2010 Half beast – half man: hybrid figures in animal art. *World Archaeology* 42(2):261–272.
- Kristoffersen, E.S. 2014 Møte med mennesker på høyden. Tre fortellinger. In *Et Akropolis på Jæren? Tinghaugplatået gjennom jernalderen*, E.S. Kristoffersen, M. Nitter and E.S. Pedersen (eds.), pp. 177–181. Ams-Varia 55. Arkeologisk museum, Universitetet i Stavanger, Stavanger.
- Kristoffersen, E.S. 2015 «En ganske ualmindelig stor og praktfull spænde af sølv». In *Dalemfunnet*, L. Hedeager (ed.), p. 28–36. Norske Oldfunn XXX. Kulturhistorisk museum, Universitetet i Oslo, Oslo.
- Kristoffersen, E.S. 2017 Defining and Transcending Boundaries in Style I Animal Art. In *Life on the Edge: Social, Political and Religious Frontiers in Early Medieval Europe*, S. Semple, C. Corsini and S. Mui (eds.), pp. 365–372. Braunschweigisches Landesmuseum, Braunschweig.
- Kristoffersen, E.S. and U. Pedersen 2020 Changing perspectives in southwest Norwegian Style I. In *Barbaric splendour: The use of image before and after Rome*, T. Martin and W. Morrison (eds.), pp. 47–60. Archaeopress, Oxford.
- Lund, J. 2017 Connectedness with things. Animated objects of Viking Age Scandinavia and early medieval Europe. *Archaeological Dialogues* 24(1):89–108.
- Martin, T.F. 2020 Barbaric tendencies? Iron Age and early medieval art in comparison. In *Barbaric splendour: The use of image before and after Rome*, T. Martin and W. Morrison (eds.), pp. 1–17. Archaeopress, Oxford.
- Nielsen, K.H. 1999 Female grave goods of southern and eastern Scandinavia from the Late Germanic Iron Age or Vendel Period. In *The Pace of Change. Studies in Early-Medieval Chronology*, J. Hines, K.H. Nielsen and F. Sigmund (eds.), pp. 160–194. Oxbow books, Oxford.
- Nielsen, K.H. 2001 The Wolf-Warrior – Animal Symbolism on Weaponry of the 6th and 7th centuries. In *Archäologische Zellwerk. Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte in Europa und Asien. Festschrift für Helmut Roth zum 60. Geburtstag*, E. Pohl, U. Recker and C. Theune (eds.), pp. 471–481. Leidorf, Rahden/Westfalen.
- Nielsen, K.H. 2002 Ulv, hest og drage. Ikonografisk analyse af dyrene i stil II-III. *Hikuin* 29:187–218.
- Pedersen, U. and E.S. Kristoffersen 2018 A Scandinavian Relief Brooch: Artistic Vision and Practical Method Combined. *Medieval Archaeology* 62(2):219–236.
- Pesch, A. 2015 *Die Kraft der Tiere. Völkerwanderungszeitliche Goldhalskragen und die Grundzüge Germanischer Kunst*. Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Leibniz-Forschungsinstitut für Archäologie und Zentrum für Baltische und Scandinavische Archäologie, Mainz.
- Rødsrud, C. and I.M. Røstad 2020 Hedmarkens merovingertid i et fugleperspektiv. In *Ingen vei utenom. Arkeologiske undersøkelser i forbindelse med etablering av ny rv. 3/25 i Løten og Elverum kommuner, Innlandet*, C. Rødsrud and A. Mjærum (eds.), pp. 175–186. Cappelen Damm Akademisk, Oslo.
- Røstad, I.M. 2008 Fugl eller fisk? En liten fugleformet spenne fra Merovingertid. *Viking* 71: 103–114.
- Røstad, I.M. 2018 The immortal brooch. The tradition of great ornamental bow brooches in Migration and Merovingian Period Norway. In *Charismatic Objects. From Roman Times to the Middle Ages*, M. Vedeler, I.M. Røstad, E.S. Kristoffersen and A.Z.T. Glørstad (eds.), pp. 73–101. Cappelen Damm Akademisk, Oslo.
- Røstad, I.M. 2021 *The Language of Jewellery. Dress-accessories and Negotiations of Identity in Scandinavia, c. AD 400–650/700*. Norske Oldfunn 32. Cappelen Akademisk, Oslo.
- Salin, B. 1904 *Die altgermanische Thierornamentik: Typologische Studie über Germanische Metall-Gegenstände aus dem 4. bis 9. Jahrhundert, nebst einer Studie über irische Ornamentik*. Beckmans Buchdruckerei, Stockholm.
- Vedeler, M., E.S. Kristoffersen and I.M. Røstad 2018 Dressed for ritual, dressed for life. A Migration-period Grave from Sande in Norway. *Medieval Archaeology* 62(1):1–27.
- Ørsnes, M. 1966 *Form og stil i Sydkandinaviens yngre germanske jernalder*. Nationalmuseets skrifter, Arkæologisk-historisk række 11, Nationalmuseet, København.